



FREDERICK COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
September 18, 2013

TITLE: Damascus Road Community Church Parking Lot Expansion: Phase 3

FILE NUMBER: SP 95-40A (AP# 13643, & FRO# 13645)

REQUEST: **Site Development Plan Approval**
Phase 3 improvements comprised of the addition of 533 new parking spaces and the elimination of 109 previously approved existing parking spaces.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

LOCATION: North-side Old National Pike, 500' east of Bartholows Road
TAX MAP/PARCEL: Tax Map 89, Parcel 29
ZONE: Agricultural
REGION: New Market
WATER/SEWER: No Planned Service
COMP. PLAN/LAND USE: Agricultural/Rural

APPLICANT/REPRESENTATIVES:

APPLICANT: DRCC Properties, LLC
OWNER: same
ENGINEER: Terra Solutions Engineering, LLC.
ARCHITECT: Not Listed.
ATTORNEY: Not Listed

STAFF: Tolson DeSa, Principal Planner II

RECOMMENDATION: **Conditional Approval**

Enclosures:

Exhibit #1: Damascus Road Community Church: Parking Lot Expansion Site Rendering (Overall)
Exhibit #2: Damascus Road Community Church: Parking Lot Expansion Site Rendering (Close-up)
Exhibit #3: Parking Space Modification Justification Statement

STAFF REPORT

ISSUE

The Applicant is requesting Phase 3 improvements comprised of the addition of 533 new parking spaces, while eliminating 109 previously approved parking spaces. The new parking total proposed by this Phase 3 portion of the overall site is 790 parking spaces. The proposed use is being reviewed under the ***Places of Worship*** use under **INSTITUTIONAL** per § 1-19-5.310 of the Zoning Ordinance. This proposed use is a principal-permitted-use subject to site development plan approval.

BACKGROUND

1995 Cell Tower Application and New 2009 Co-Location Site Plan Application: In 1995, the Board of Appeals approved a cell tower use on this remainder (subject parcel of the church site plan) and the Frederick County Planning Commission (FcPc) approved a site plan later that year. The cell tower is built and is located approximately 400' east of the proposed church.

The Staff is currently reviewing a new, administrative site plan application for co-location of a different facility on the same tower. No changes to ground (site plan) conditions are anticipated. The cell tower is currently accessed by an existing residential driveway, which was approved as a common access and driveway for three proposed lots.

On September 15, 2011, The Applicant requested a Zoning Verification letter (Exhibit #2) from the Zoning Administrator regarding the question "Is there any zoning issue, concern or uncertainty with the DRCC constructing church related buildings within the 'fall zone' of the existing cell tower?"

The Zoning Administrator did not have any objection to constructing place of worship related buildings within the 'fall zone' of the existing cell tower located on the same property.

Previous 2007 Minor Subdivision Approval and Current Subdivision Application: The proposed church site development is on the 36.6-acre remainder of a minor, three-lot subdivision that was approved by the FcPc in November 2007. The three lots were the 4th, 5th and 6th lots subdivided since 1965 from the original parcel, and were therefore, subject to FcPc review, being part of a major residential subdivision.

In November 2007, the FcPc also approved two panhandles for the three lots and a common entrance point along Old National Pike. The common entrance point and the panhandles were located over an existing driveway that served two single-family homes, one of which is being demolished.

After the church site plan was submitted (June 3rd 2007), Traffic Engineering Staff requested that a separate, proposed entrance for the church be combined with the entrance point for the three lots in a new, safer location. Therefore, a concurrent application request for the April 2009 FcPc Agenda was re-approved for a new, combined entrance point for the church and three lots, and for re-location of the previously-approved panhandles, thus amending the November 2007 FcPc approval.

The Applicant submitted this site plan application in June 2007, requesting site plan approval for the Phase 1 Church building consisting of 22,520 square feet. The site plan was presented to the FCPC at a hearing on April 8, 2009 and was conditionally approved at that time.

On November 9, 2011 the FCPC reviewed and approved the construction of a three phased site plan and APFO comprised of the following; Phase 1 a 55,480 sq. ft. church building with parking fields to the south, east and north of the building. Phase 2A consists of the following; 23,750 square foot

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gymnasium, which is located to the east of the previously approved 22,520 square foot church building. Phase 2B consists of a 29,860 square foot Grand Sanctuary, with 74 underground parking spaces below the structure. Phase 2B also contains a 1,870 square foot mezzanine for the Grand Sanctuary. The total combined building square footage for Phases 2A and 2B is 55,480 square feet. Phase 3 consisted of 35 parking spaces and is proposed to be revised as part of this application.

Existing Site Characteristics

The site is located within the Agricultural (AG) Zoning District, shown without color in the map below. The site is currently developed with a 22,520 square foot church building. The property to the north of the site is developed with a storage yard; the properties to the east and west are vacant agricultural grounds.

ANALYSIS

Summary of Development Standards Findings and Conclusions

One of the primary issues with this submittal was the additional parking being proposed. In response to a number of staff comments, the applicant has submitted a plan incorporating a number of design techniques to lessen the impact both visually and environmentally on the site.

Site Development Plan Approval shall be granted based upon the criteria found in §1-19-3.300.4 Site Plan Review Approval Criteria of the Frederick County zoning ordinance.

Site Development §1-19-3.300.4 (A): *Existing and anticipated surrounding land uses have been adequately considered in the design of the development and negative impacts have been minimized through such means as building placement or scale, landscaping, or screening, and an evaluation of lighting. Anticipated surrounding uses shall be determined based upon existing zoning and land use designations.*

Findings/Conclusions

- 1. Dimensional Requirements/Bulk Standards §1-19-6.100:** The proposed parking lot layout meets all of the dimensional requirements and bulk standards of the zoning district.
- 2. Signage §1-19-6.300:** There is no additional signage proposed with this site development plan proposal.
- 3. Landscaping §1-19-6.400:** The Applicant has worked with Staff in order to develop a landscaped plan that complies with the Z.O. requirements as well as increases the aesthetic of the proposed parking area. The Applicant has exceeded the required 20% canopy cover over the proposed parking area, as well as provided a deciduous tree buffer around the perimeter of the new parking area including on both sides of the proposed driveways leading to the parking field as well as down both sides of the pedestrian sidewalk leading from the parking lot to the sanctuary.
- 4. Screening §1-19-6.400:** The Applicant has complied with the screening and landscaping requirements of Z.O. Section 1-19-6.400.
- 5. Lighting §1-19-6.500:** There is no additional lighting proposed with this site plan.

Transportation and Parking §1-19-3.300.4 (B): *The transportation system and parking areas are adequate to serve the proposed use in addition to existing uses by providing safe and efficient circulation, and design consideration that maximizes connections with surrounding land uses and*

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accommodates public transit facilities. Evaluation factors include: on-street parking impacts, off-street parking and loading design, access location and design, vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation and safety, and existing or planned transit facilities.

Findings/Conclusions

1. **Access/Circulation:** The Applicant will utilize the recently built closed-section monumented entrance with a 14' entrance lane and two 11' exit lanes. No modifications are needed to accommodate the additional parking spaces. However, there is a concern that on Sunday mornings, a surge of arriving vehicles turning left into the site from the center turn lane could overlap with trips using that same center lane to turn left onto southbound Bartholows Road. To maximize safety, that Applicant has agreed to station a point control officer at the entrance during peak ingress periods, as necessary, to ameliorate the potential conflict by stopping westbound traffic on Old National Pike, thus permitting a free flow of left turning traffic to access the site.
2. **Connectivity §1-19-6.220 (F):** This development proposal does not propose any further connections to adjacent properties due to the topography as well as the existing FRO easements on the eastern and western property boundaries.
3. **Public Transit:** This site is not served by Transit.
4. **Vehicle Parking and Loading §1-19-6.200-through 1-19-6.220:** The Applicant is requesting the addition of 533 new parking spaces, while eliminating 109 previously approved parking spaces. In accordance with Z.O. § 1-19-6.220.A.4; 1 space is required for every 5 seats in the sanctuary, therefore 1,500 seats requires 300 parking spaces. The Applicant is proposing a total of 790 parking spaces. The 790 parking spaces are broken down as follows: 255 surface spaces in Phase 1 & 2 + 533 to be located on the bluff, as part of the proposed Phase 3 expansion. In order to reduce the impervious cover the Applicant worked with Staff to add 85, 8'x16' compact parking spaces throughout the site, as well as approximately 83,000 square feet of pervious pavement.

The Applicant is seeking a parking space modification (Exhibit #3) in accordance with Z.O. Section 1-19-6.220.A.1. The Applicant has performed car counts for all of the weekend services between May and November 2012, DRCC is averaging parking counts closer to one space for every 2.14 seats.

Staff is seeking a determination from the FCPC, in accordance with 1-19-6.220.A.1 for the addition of 490 parking spaces located on the bluff, while eliminating 109 spaces from the previously approved site plan, for a total of 790 parking spaces on site.

Loading spaces are not required as part of this development proposal, the previously approved site plan proposed 4 loading spaces.

5. **Bicycle Parking §1-19-6.220 (H):** The Applicant is not required to provide any additional bike racks as part of this application.
6. **Pedestrian Circulation and Safety §1-19-6.220 (G):** The Applicant designed two pedestrian sidewalks within the proposed parking area in order to provide a safe pedestrian walkway away from the traffic flows. The two sidewalks lead into another sidewalk that runs from the perimeter of the proposed parking lot into the sanctuary.

Conditions: Parking Space Modification in accordance with Z.O. § 1-19-6.220.A.1 to permit a parking space modification in order to allow an additional 490 parking spaces over the required target number of 300.

Public Utilities §1-19-3.300.4 (C): *Where the proposed development will be served by publicly owned community water and sewer, the facilities shall be adequate to serve the proposed development. Where proposed development will be served by facilities other than publicly owned community water and sewer, the facilities shall meet the requirements of and receive approval from the Maryland Department of the Environment/the Frederick County Health Department.*

Findings/Conclusions

Private Well and Septic: The site will be served by individual well and septic.

Septic requirements: The platted septic field was sized to accommodate 4,999 gallons per day (GPD). The existing septic system has been designed with a large (35,000 gallon) surge holding tank and will pump at a maximum daily septic flow rate of 4,950 gallons or less. The system has been designed to pump the weekly peak flow into the existing septic field at an equalized flow rate over seven (7) day time frame and to never exceed the maximum allowable infiltration rate of 4,999 gpd into the existing platted 20,000 sq ft septic field.

The existing septic system design was reviewed and approved as part of Phase 1 Site Plan design and inspected by the Frederick County Health Department. A small warming kitchen was approved and installed as part of Phase 1 and will continue to operate as constructed and authorized under that phase.

The proposed parking lot improvements will not result in an increase in church seats or activities during the week. The Health Department has conditionally approved the proposed Phase 3 parking lot expansion plans.

Natural features §1-19-3.300.4 (D): *Natural features of the site have been evaluated and to the greatest extent practical maintained in a natural state and incorporated into the design of the development. Evaluation factors include topography, vegetation, sensitive resources, and natural hazards.*

Findings/Conclusions

1. **Topography:** The Phase 3 portion of the site slopes up significantly to the north rising from the finished grade of 610 at the parking lot to 640 at the crest of the bluff. At the 640 elevation the remainder of the site to the north is quite flat.
2. **Vegetation:** The bank of the slope and the crest of the bluff is vegetated with deciduous trees and shrubs. This vegetation is proposed to be preserved, and supplemented with additional landscaping. The remainder of the bluff to the north is all tall grasses. The existing vegetation aids in stabilizing the bank leading up to the crest of the bluff as well as providing additional screening to the proposed Phase 3 parking expansion.
3. **Sensitive Resources:** There are no sensitive resources located on site.
4. **Natural Hazards:** There are no natural hazards located on site.

Common Areas §1-19-3.300.4 (E): *If the plan of development includes common areas and/or facilities, the Planning Commission as a condition of approval may review the ownership, use, and maintenance of such lands or property to ensure the preservation of such areas, property, and facilities for their intended purposes.*

Findings/Conclusions

1. **Proposed Common Area:** The site is an institutional use, therefore there is no required common area associated with this development.
2. **Ownership:** The site is a privately owned institutional use.

Moderately Priced Dwelling Units – Chapter §1-6A: The site is an institutional use, and therefore is exempt from the MPDU requirement.

Stormwater Management – Chapter §1-15.2: All site stormwater management (SWM) shall be designed and installed in accordance with the 2000 Maryland Stormwater Design Manual, including all revisions and supplements. The existing SWM facility was designed as a surface sand filter pond and provides water quality control through filtration and quantity control by detaining the excess site run-off within the existing on-site SWM pond facility for Phases 1 & 2 for a total impervious area of 222,155 square feet, which is slightly over the actual impervious area of 219,195 square feet. Phase 3 will also be designed in accordance with the 2000 Maryland Stormwater Design Manual, including all revisions and supplements, and shall utilize pervious pavement and bio-retention facilities to meet current SWM regulations.

Staff has approved a SWM Concept plan for the proposed improvements on site.

Subdivision Regulations – Chapter §1-16: There is no subdivision activity proposed as part of the development.

APFO – Chapter §1-20:

1. **Schools.** The development of the property is a non-residential land use and is therefore exempt from APFO testing for Schools.
2. **Water/Sewer.** The Property has water and sewer classification of No Planned Service (NPS) in the County's *Master Water and Sewer Plan* and is therefore exempt from APFO testing for public water and sewer.
3. **Roads.** APFO Roads was previously mitigated for this use as part of the original approval by the FCPC on April 8th, 2009 (AP #6579) and again on November 9, 2011 (AP #11998). APFO roads is exempt for the proposed parking lot expansion because no additional sanctuary or ancillary building space is being proposed by this site plan.

Forest Resource – Chapter §1-21: All FRO requirements for this property were met at the time of subdivision plat recordation. Existing FRO easements are located on the property and must be protected throughout the development of the project.

Historic Preservation – Chapter §1-23: There are no historic structures/features impacted by this development proposal.

<i>Other Agency or Ordinance Requirements</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<i>Development Review Engineering (DRE):</i>	Conditional Approval
<i>Development Review Planning:</i>	Hold: Address all agency comments as the plan proceeds through to completion.
<i>State Highway Administration (SHA):</i>	N/A
<i>Div. of Utilities and Solid Waste Mngt. (DUSWM):</i>	N/A
<i>Health Dept.</i>	Conditional Approval
<i>Office of Life Safety</i>	Approved
<i>Traffic Engineering</i>	Approved
<i>Historic Preservation</i>	N/A

RECOMMENDATION

Staff has no objection to conditional approval of the site plan, should the Planning Commission approve the Parking Space Modification. If the Planning Commission conditionally approves the site plan, the site plan is valid for a period of three (3) years from the date of Planning Commission approval.

Based upon the findings and conclusions as presented in the staff report the application meets or will meet all applicable zoning, APFO, and FRO requirements once the following conditions are met:

1. Address all agency comments as the plan proceeds through to completion.
2. Parking Space Modification accordance with 1-19-6.220.A.1 for the addition of 490 parking spaces located on the bluff, while eliminating 109 spaces from the previously approved site plan, for a total of 790 parking spaces on site.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION **MOTION TO APPROVE**

I move that the Planning Commission **APPROVE** Site Plan SP 95-40A **with conditions** as listed in the staff report for the proposed 533 new parking spaces, based on the findings and conclusions of the staff report and the testimony, exhibits, and documentary evidence produced at the public meeting.

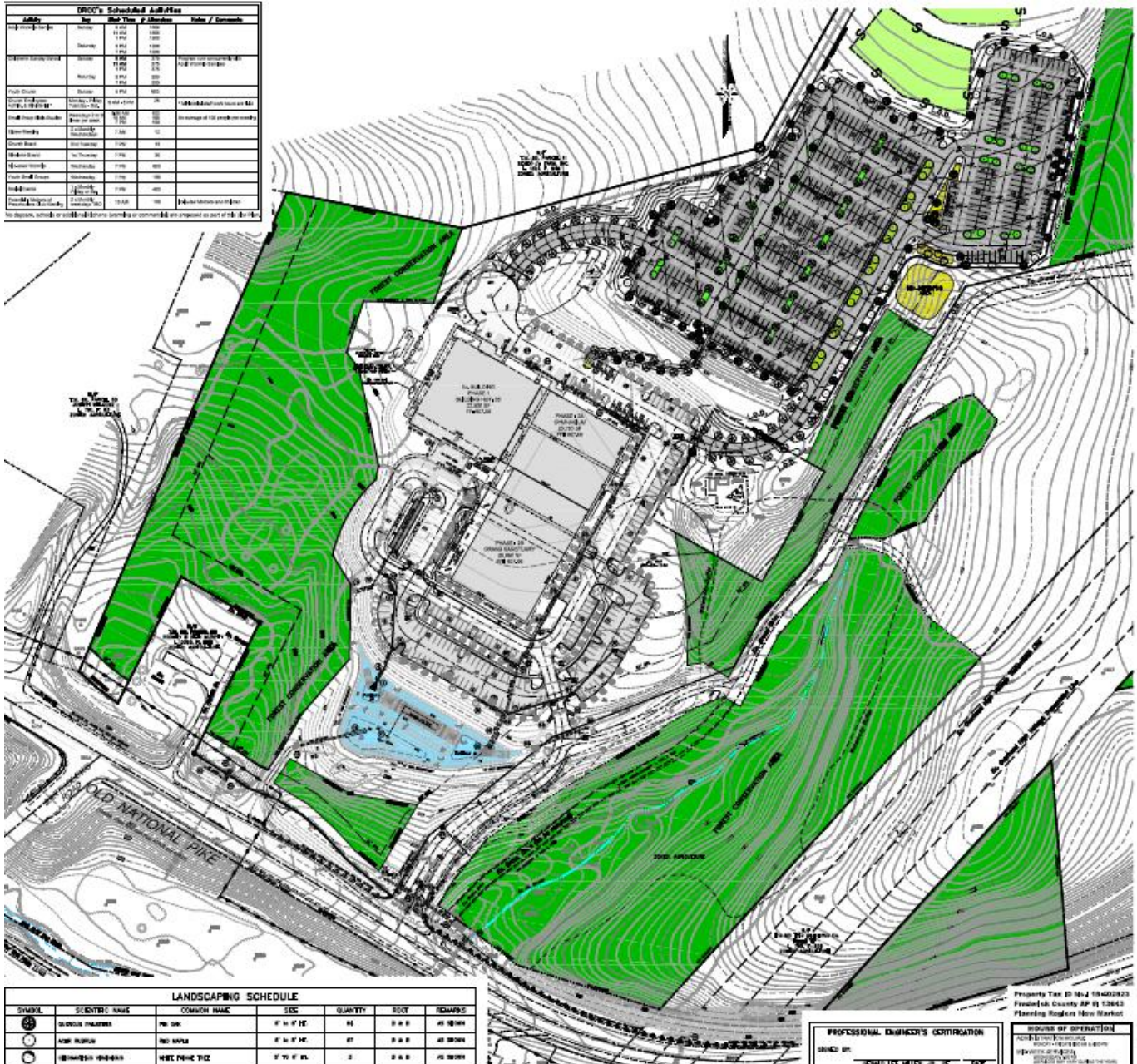
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Exhibit #2: Damascus Road Community Church: Parking Lot Expansion Site Rendering (Close-up)



August 19, 2013

Hand Delivered

Mr. Tolson DeSa
Principal Planner II
Community Development Division
Frederick County, Maryland
30 North Market Street
Frederick, Maryland 21701

**DAMASCUS ROAD COMMUNITY CHURCH
ADDITIONAL PARKING REQUEST
VIA AN AMENDED SITE PLAN SUBMISSION**

Dear Mr. DeSa:

As you have discussed with Mr. Lee Miller and Mr. Mark Schaefer, Damascus Road Community Church (DRCC) is experiencing a significantly higher number of cars during our Worship Services than the five (5) seats per parking space target upon which our Phase 2 & 3 Site Plan was designed and approved.

Based on actual car counts during all of our weekend services between May and November 2012, DRCC is actually experiencing an average of 2.14 seats per parking space during all services.

As our representatives have previously explained to you, Damascus Road Community Church:

1. Is extremely active within the Frederick Area Communities, with our Men's Ministry recently receiving the 2013 Lord Nichens Award;
2. Has several teaching pastors who all draw equally large worship service attendance;
3. Has a Senior Leadership Transition Plan in place;

We believe all of these factors will result in the un-interrupted continuance of our growth, which we have been experiencing over the past 4-5 years.

In our most recently approved Site Plan, Frederick County approved DRCC to develop a 1,500 seat sanctuary; 1,500 seats divided by our actual parking ratio of 2.14, including a 20% holiday or special events factor, results in the need for a total of 790 parking spaces

The attached worksheet reflects the calculations which result in our request for 533 additional parking spaces.

Based upon the above, and the recent meetings between our representatives and Frederick County's Planning Staff, Damascus Road Community Church respectively requests 533 additional parking spaces be approved, as shown on our Amended Phase 3 - Site Plan, which is submitted with our request herein.

Thank you for the County's careful evaluation and consideration of our request for our much needed, additional parking.

Sincerely,

Deborah Lawrence
Director of Operations